

My Home	People	Communities	Topics	White Paper Library
---------	--------	-------------	--------	---------------------

## Linux Community

[Home](#) [Blogs](#) [Groups](#) [Wiki](#) [White Papers](#) [Q&A and Docs](#) [Topics](#) [Subscriptions](#)**Technology & Life Integration: Fiction or Future**by [Locutus](#) (System Administrator)

A peek into the mind of Locutus as he explores the realms of possibilities that computers and related technology bring. What will ...[more](#)

[Blog Main](#) / [Archive](#) / [Invite Peers](#) [RSS for Posts](#) / [RSS for Comments](#)[Previous Entry](#) / [Next Entry](#)**Are multiple desktops really useful**[Locutus](#) (System Administrator) posted 12/26/2006 | [Comments](#) (29)

One of the biggest differences between the windows world and the linux world is the windows world only has one desktop while the linux world can have several. For example KDE comes default with four desktops and can have up to twenty. That's a lot of desktops. However are all those desktops really useful?

I think they are and I guess a lot of other people do too because even for windows there are third party programs to give windows more desktops. Unfortunately they don't come standard with windows and you have to part with some valuable pieces of paper to use them.

So how could all those desktops be put to effective use? After all, even if you only have one desktop, you can select the application you want to work with from the toolbar in the same amount of time it takes to switch desktops. Even if you want to work with several applications at once it is an easy matter to arrange them on the screen so they can be seen easily. The value of multiple desktops comes to the forefront when you have groups of applications that you want to work with. Granted not many people work with umpteen dozen applications at the same time but it is common, even for people with normal office computing knowledge, to have several word processing and a few spreadsheets as well as a web page or two open at the same time. Lets take a quick scenario.

You have a word processing document and a related spreadsheet open and arranged on to your current desktop. You find that you need to browse the web to get some information and that leads to several pages open at once. This leads to a lot of application switching as you go from the web pages to the spreadsheet and then back to the web pages then back to the word processing document. It is hard to explain a visual experience in words but I am sure you all know what I mean.

If you had multiple desktops however you could leave your word processing document and spreadsheet arranged the way they are, switch to another desktop, open up all your web pages and arrange them on that desktop. Then with just a single desktop switch all your information is arranged and easily visible and even better, your application tasks are grouped without everything getting mixed up like a frog in a blender.

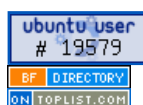
Once you get used to multiple desktops you will find that they help you organise your tasks easier and information is more readily accessible. After working with multiple desktops for a while, going back to a single desktop system is like touch typing with only two fingers.

What do you think?

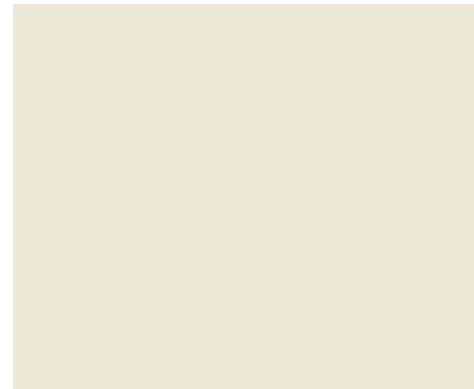
*"I get paid to support Windows, I use Linux to get work done."*

Digg

submit

**2:07-cv-447(RRR)  
PX 286****Connect to this blog****Connect to this blog to be notified of new posts.**

Your E-mail address

**Connect**[Sign In](#) / [Ask a Question](#)**SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE.**  
Start your blog @ [Toolbox for IT](#) today →**My Favourite Sites**[Locutus](#)  
[Tuxmachines](#)  
[Raider's Realm](#)  
[Linux Today](#)**Get the Buzz!****TOP SCIENCE & TECH BUZZ**

**Chinese Fluoride In Mass. Water Raises...** WCVB Boston  
17 hours ago The Amesbury Water Department pulled fluoride from its system amid concerns about...

**A Disastrous Year: 2010 Death Toll Already...** Yahoo! News  
17 hours ago LiveScience.com - Just a few months into 2010, and Mother Nature has delivered a...

**Lawmakers probe lax enforcement of animal...** Yahoo! News  
11 hours ago AP - The knives at the slaughterhouse weren't properly sanitized, a government...


[Assimilated Borgs](#)
[Previous Entry](#) / [Next Entry](#)

#### Related White Papers

[Conquer the Challenge of Managing Desktop Environments](#)  
[D2D2T Backup Architectures And The Impact Of Data Deduplication](#)  
[Why You Need to Defragment](#)

[More White Papers...](#)

#### Related Jobs

[Business Intelligence Analyst](#)  
[Sr. Database Security Engineer](#)  
[SQL, SCRIPTING, SSIS Developer](#)

#### More on Vendor

[Linux Operating System.](#)
[RSS for Comments](#)

#### Comments (29)


**Bivert** writes:

12/26/2006 #

For every standardized technology that is used by the vast majority, there are some things that a minority wants to do that will beyond what that technology easily and simply provides. For example, for many years I created specialized directories outside of the windows desktop and the "My Documents" folder. I believed I needed my unique little world, it made me feel special. In the last two years I have cured myself of the habit. Why? Because I found that it was easier to back up everything if I kept it in one place in my folder structure. Moreover, when I looked at other people's machines I found that I was lost, because they didn't keep things where I expected them. Now I keep my applications on my toolbar, and my frequently accessed web page shortcuts and folders on my one and only desktop. If I have a group of folders or applications that I use when I am in a certain mode, I put them in a single folder on my desktop. That way I can easily work in one mode by maximizing such a folder. When I need to back up ALL my unique work, I just drage :My Documents" into my central server. Maybe I'm getting senile, but I find that KISS and using the standard Windows folder organization makes me a lot more efficient. I myself can only effectively open and use 3-4 applications at one time - with 6-10 in the background. Beyond that and I end up spending 20 minutes making I sure I save everything when I close down at the end of the day and when I experience unexpected shut downs (e.g. when I need cure a hung up network connection) Of course, younger minds might want multiple desk tops with 40-50 applications open at the same time.


**LonerVamp** writes:

12/26/2006 #

I don't use multiple desktops all that much, less so in Linux. Basically I have used them to clean up my task bar. Things I leave open all day but don't necessarily use or need to click on get put into a second workspace. On my Windows box I used to use AltDesk and I would throw some mgmt tools over there (DameWare, in particular) and my open VPN cmd windows and some other small things. I'd almost be happier with multiple monitors or systems on my desk. :) That way I could have the screens up all the time and look at some monitoring tools or dashboards throughout the day. :)


**Locutus** writes:

12/26/2006 #

You make a couple of very good points there BiVet. Working outside of a standard make it hard for yourself not for others and the KISS principle. I wouldn't say that multiple desktops are more complicated, just different and could/should be a new standard. For any mind young or younger trying to juggle more than ten tasks at a time becomes too hard. However grouping those tasks as you do and then just managing the groups makes it easier. I pretty much use multiple desktops as you do LonerVamp. I never need more than four and they are only for applications that stay open constantly while one desktop is my main working one. I also would be happier with multiple screens or systems but the multiple desktops are a poor mans version :)


**frank** writes:

12/26/2006 #



**Apple takes pre-orders for April 3 iPad...** - Yahoo! News  
 2 hours ago AP - Apple is accepting pre-orders for the iPad, its new touch-screen gadget for...

[» more on Yahoo! Buzz](#)

Get this widget...

#### Recent Comments



["Exactly. But we can take it a step further...."](#)  
 The Linux community is fragmented, or is it?



["Wow! What has happened here. linux users will..."](#)  
 Oh Linux, how shall I count thy installs?



["@Charles\\_Pattison I guess what you are saying..."](#)  
 Linux frustrates!



["@Ralph Oops. your right about the saying. I..."](#)  
 Good for the goose but not for the gander.



["cd "C:\program files\symantec\liveupdate" start..."](#)  
 How to silently and remotely remove Symantec ...

[More Recent Comments...](#)

#### Popular Entries by Locutus

[Fancy Schmancy or Fine and Functional?](#)  
[Goodbye KDE. Its been nice knowing you.](#)  
[But Linux has so many little things wrong ...](#)  
[Linux frustrates!](#)  
[Sigh! A simple USB stick causes so many ...](#)

#### Categories

[Advice](#) (189) / [Humor](#) (62) / [News](#) (79) /

[Opinion](#) (380)

well, i use one (of my six) virtual desktop for one task. for example, desktop 4 is websurfing, desktop 6 is communication (email, im, irc) and 3 is system administration. i really like having a lot of desktops. since i don't reboot that often and programms are started and assigned to desktops automatically, i always know where to find what with witch purpose (i always have alot of xterms open).

---

 **suribe** writes: 12/27/2006 #


in brief: YES!

---

 **jo** writes: 12/27/2006 #

\*grin\* yeah

---

 **Yehppael** writes: 12/28/2006 #

Same as Frank above, though only four desktops i use one for blender3d one for browsing pictures that i use for reference in blender one, for chat and browsing and another for misc stuff usually konqueror or amarok, at work it doesnt matter that much because i have only IE(they dont't let me install firefox) and the software that i work with. So i guess it's up to you how much work space you need ...

---

 **Kjartan Ohr** writes: 12/28/2006 #

I have 20 workspaces. 1. xmms/music-player 2. xterm 3. xterm 4. File browser 5. Opera 6. Firefox 7. xterm, ssh to my server 8. xchat/irc 9. xterm, ssh to other servers 10. gaim/msn 11. vmware 12 - 20 other stuff At work I have 30 workspaces. Where 1-20 is the same. But 21-30 is for VNC and Remote Desktop. At work I have to be connected to many computer at the same time. And many projects at the same time.

---

 **damijan** writes: 12/28/2006 #

To Yehppael "at work it doesnt matter that much because i have only IE (they dont't let me install firefox)" I suggest you to try portable Firefox ([http://portableapps.com/apps/internet/firefox\\_portable](http://portableapps.com/apps/internet/firefox_portable)). You dont install it on your HD - you can have it on your USB stick. Now to relevant stuff. I always use 4 desktops. First is for Documents, 2nd for konsole/administration, 3rd is for multimedia and 4th for browsing (so I am sending this from 4th desktop). I am really used to have 4 desktops and going back to one would be a painful and horrible move.

---

 **dcperspective** writes: 12/28/2006 #

I've gotten very comfortable with multiple desktops in sled 10. Is very usefull working with spreadsheets, docs, and most importantly for me when cleaning up and paring down photography. I find the xgl advanced raphics far better than the simple desktoop switch- definitely give the user (at least this one) a more fluid and graspable aspect of multiple desktops.

---

 **Matt Herres** writes: 12/28/2006 #

I have my desktop (3 x 20" monitors - yep - multi-headed) set for 20 desktops. I use as many as necessary. Less than I used to because I can easily fit a VMWare window in one (1/3rd of my space) monitor. In addition to reserving 20 desktops, for audio [music] work, I start another X Window server to run as root (avoids some issues). It's not uncommon on any one (of several projects) for me to dedicate at least 1 desktop for that project. A script I use (xterm9x) will start me 9 adjacent 80x60 xterms between the 3 screens... as the script places each xterm at a different coordinate. Pics of desktops at: [http://www.mattherres.com/DeskPhotos/desktop\\_photos.html](http://www.mattherres.com/DeskPhotos/desktop_photos.html) -- /matt

---

 **Nivag** writes: 12/28/2006 #

I am 56 (being older doesn't prevent one from being able to use multiple Virtual Desktops!), and I have 15 Virtual Desktops, 5 currently in use, on dual monitors - my 9 year old son has 4. See my comment on LinuxToday.com for more details.

---

 **Kwan** writes: 12/28/2006 #

I can't work as effectively with just a single desktop. In the most extreme cases I'll have all four desktops populated, mostly with ssh sessions running monitors (top, nmon) to different systems. Tabs are great for browsing and sort of obviate the need for a separate desktop, but they're not so useful when you need to see the entire window (as in the case with a monitor). Most often though it's just to keep the email and web applications separate. I've found that if they're on the same visual desktop then I'm tempted to browse too often and this is a huge distraction. It's also very useful for those applications that need a shell session started. By starting the app on a separate desktop I can then move the GUI portion (if it exists) to a separate yet still monitor the console output. Yes, you can do the same with redirects and nohups, but it's not quite as convenient. On a Windows system this is particularly useful since CMD windows need to hang around for many Java apps and so on.



**Tom** writes:

12/28/2006 #

As a lifelong Unix and Linux user, I have always had virtual desktops on my computers. I use one desktop for each major task that I am working on. On the few occasions when I have used Windows or Macs, I have found the lack of virtual desktops to be an annoying deficiency.



**Jon Haugsand** writes:

12/28/2006 #

The concept of multiple desktops is like any other organisational concept. I remember the days when I worked in an operating system where each user had the possibility to create up to 256 files in a flat structure. When unix like file systems were suggested, most people could not see the purpose. In fact, "You will never know where you placed your files anymore," where the common argument. The main purpose of multiple desktops is not necessarily the simplicity of hiding/diclosing windows, but the work concept. You can have one desktop for different kind of working concepts. E.g. email read/write, music (player, organization and ripping), program development, document writing, adult activities... - Jon who is too old to miss a window manager with password protected desktops.



**Sam Clark** writes:

12/28/2006 #

Desktop 1: Personal Firefox/IM/THunderbird Desktop 2: Terminals Desktop 3: Anjuta Desktop 4: Reference and Reference Desktop 5: Media



**andyp** writes:

12/28/2006 #

Oddly, on my Linux box I do use multiple desktops (6), and I think that works well. On Windows, I'm far more used to running all apps full screen, and switching between them via the taskbar/alt-tab... I've never got to grips with multiple desktops on Windows, and I just can't put my finger on why.



**chrylis** writes:

12/28/2006 #

Switching desktops only takes as long as picking an app from the taskbar if you're mousebound. I have set up custom keys for switching desktops (KDE's default Control+Fx is too out-of-the-way), and I can switch to any of my four virtually thoughtlessly and in under half a second. I think, though, that the feature I like best about virtual desktops is always knowing where my windows are; my instant messaging isn't on this side or that side or buried three windows under, it's right (Win+F) *there!*



**glenn** writes:

12/28/2006 #

I'm the guy that everyone in my family calls for PC support and of course they are mostly Windows users. Something I've noticed is that Windows users tend to close an app when they think they are finished with it even if they may want to use it again in a few minutes. Why is that? I think it's because the single desktop gets too cluttered with more than a few apps open. Taskbar icons are too small, crowded together and not at all informative. IE is the worst - all the IE taskbar icons are exactly the same and provide no distinction from one IE window to the next. You have to click several time just to find the IE window you want. I've tried some of the 3rd party virtual desktop apps for Windows and they are lacking at best. Some programs simply do not work as they seem to get lost or confused. OSX (as I understand it) does not have this ability either and again the 3rd party apps that provide this functionality do not work w/ all OSX apps. It supprises me that OSX does not have virtual desktops since the concept has been around forever in the \*nix world and even the tiniest of window

managers (e.g. Fluxbox) can do this. On my Linux machines I have at least 16 desktops and a single mouse click on the desktop shows me ALL open windows on all desktops in a nice and easy to read list with complete descriptions of what the apps are (not just some unintuitive icon) so I can easily select my mail client out of the 25, 30 (or more) open windows. Switching to another desktop is very simple too - just slide the mouse off the edge of the screen and voila! you have switched desktops or scroll the mouse wheel on the desktop and again you have switched or use the hotkeys. Of course if you are a Linux user you know that the desktop is infinitely configurable. I think if you have never used multiple desktops you cannot possibly understand the work flow that multiple desktops provide.



**Rich Steiner** writes:

12/28/2006 #

I have to use multiple desktops here at work under Windows XP because I do development on multiple platforms (Solaris, OS2200) and also have a need to use local Windows application and monitor the status of various UNIX servers in real time (mainly doing "tail -f logfile" tasks via PuTTY). Thanks to MS's MSVDM powertoy, I can have four desktops under XP, and I tend to dedicate one for local apps (Word, e-mail, etc.), one for the half-dozen or so PuTTY windows I keep pointed at the UNIX dev box, one for monitoring our QA system (customer testing), and one for monitoring our PROD systems.



**Alan Ezust** writes:

12/28/2006 #

Because KDE makes it so easy to define key shortcuts to switch between desktops and windows, and ALSO because it is possible to customize whether you are showing windows from all desktops or just windows from YOUR desktop in the bottom bar, the customizability makes it much more useful than the multiple desktop features of microsoft windows provided by the NVIDIA graphics driver, for example.



**Ronni** writes:

12/28/2006 #

For those using Windows there is a little wonder called Virtual Dimension, <http://virt-dimension.sourceforge.net>, GPL licensed. It is the program that makes my life away from \*nix desktops bearable.



**AI** writes:

12/28/2006 #

I only use two desktops but I have a dual head setup making my desktop size 3600x1200. On one desktop I do my "work" and on the other it's web surfing, games and music.



**cykes** writes:

12/29/2006 #

I have to say multiple desktops are useful. I have anywhere from 21 to 30 open at one time. As a network administrator I'm usually doing multiple tasks and as some have mentioned some desktops are designated for certain tasks like wmail, web, and log viewing. Personally I think it helps me to be more organized and yes I usually remember exactly what I'm doing in each one. When I first started using Linux multiple desktops I couldn't understand coming from a Windows environment. But now ... even my laptop I have 8 desktops simply because on this 15 inch screen real estate is scarce. However work wise I need a minimum of 15 for what I do.



**gnumber9** writes:

12/29/2006 #

Windows does have a free multiple desktop utility that "manages" four desktops. It is limited in functionality, but can ease the frustration of having to use Windows. It is available at their web site. That said, I rarely use Windows and take full advantage of multiple desktops in the KDE and GNOME environs. My magic number is six desktops and I give them names, like home, two and aux. Hot keying between desktops is extremely useful when I need to 'break' away and quickly take care of any task!



**Guriel** writes:

12/30/2006 #

Oh boy, I switched to Linux almost 4 years ago and what a blessing. I prefer KDE but sometimes I use Gnome or Enlightenment, just for fun and for diversity. The thing is the multiple desktops was a terrific idea. How often you feel crowded with so many windows you need to keep open, just move to the next desktop, really a blessing.

Now, when I need to check a friend's PC that has Windows with its only one desktop I feel more like crippled.



**RonCam** writes:

2/15/2007 #

I vote for multiple desktops, as I can keep my icons the same place for each task without clutter. The correct arrangement pops up whenever I change desktops, stays the same from week-to-week, so I don't have to hunt for things: E-mail (my five inboxes, outbox, attachments to be used) News, audio-visual (favorite TV stations) News, print media (magazine and newspaper sites) My Practice (professional sites, CE courses in progress) Banking-Currency-Finance (self-explanatory) Language Study Imaging Mail-order purchases Readings and Commentary Support for background color of choice and identifying.gif at lower-right corner OS's: Windows98SE, now Windows2000 Pro Multiple Desktops and tabbed browsing native to: Sun Microsystems StarOffice5.2 (but not later versions)



**Pollywog** writes:

3/23/2007 #

To the person who said they use 20 workspaces, doesn't that slow your machine to a crawl?



**Embedded** writes:

6/12/2007 #

Workspace

- 1 Project multitabbed directory in Konqueror with term
- 2 Kate for open/edited files
- 3 Comparison code / Extra terminal
- 4 Firefox

For me highly useful and somewhat organized.

Window 1 changes to Slickedit or Eclipse depending on whats set up for the project. So I have my IDE view in window one. KDESVN tends to get opened in Window One.

Project, Edit, Reference, Web reference.

**You are not logged in.** [Sign in](#) to post unmoderated comments or [join the community](#) to create your free profile today!

Name:  (Will display on the site)

E-mail:  (Not displayed. No Spam)

**b** **u** **i** **ABC** **link** **code** **blockquote**

Lines break automatically. Please preview your message before posting.

If not logged-in your post will not appear until approved by a community moderator. To uphold community standards, comments that are inflammatory, offensive, or contain profanity or advertisements may be removed by the author or a community moderator.

For more information, please refer to our [Terms of Use](#).

☐ **Connect to this blog to be notified of new entries.**

#### Related Blogs

[Are multiple desktops really useful](#)

[Administering mixed operating systems.](#)

#### Related Groups

[The future of Linux?](#)

[linux desktop on windows , windows desktop on linux ?](#)

#### Related Wiki Articles

[Desktop](#)

[Linux vs. Windows: Choice vs. Usability](#)

#### More from this author

[Which is better for technical support](#)

[Speed comparison between OpenOffice Calc 2.1 and MS Excel XP](#)

[Everybody Merry Christmas.](#)

[The reactions a sysadmin has when confronted by end users](#)

[How to add ssh authorization with one command](#)

**Archive Category:** [Opinion](#)

#### Keyword Tags

desktop,multiple,linux,windows

---

Disclaimer: Blog contents express the viewpoints of their independent authors and are not reviewed for correctness or accuracy by Toolbox for IT. Any opinions, comments, solutions or other commentary expressed by blog authors are not endorsed or recommended by Toolbox for IT or any vendor. If you feel a blog entry is inappropriate, [click here](#) to notify Toolbox for IT.

---

[Browse all IT Blogs](#)

---

[About](#) / [Contact us](#) / [Privacy](#) / [Terms of Use](#) / [Work at Toolbox.com](#) / [Advertise with Toolbox for IT](#) / [Provide Feedback](#)

---

**Topics:** [Business Intelligence](#) / [C Languages](#) / [CIO](#) / [CRM](#) / [Database](#) / [Data Center](#) **NEW!** / [Data Warehouse](#) / [EAI](#) / [Emerging Technologies](#) / [ERP](#) / [Hardware](#) / [Knowledge Management](#) / [Networking](#) / [Project Management](#) / [SCM](#) / [Security](#) / [Storage](#) / [Telephony](#) **NEW!** / [Web Design](#) / [Wireless](#) / [Baan](#) / [Java](#) / [Linux](#) / [Oracle](#) / [PeopleSoft](#) / [SAP](#) / [Siebel](#) / [UNIX](#) / [Visual Basic](#) / [Windows](#)

**Also at Toolbox for IT:** [Blogs](#) / [Groups](#) / [Wiki](#) / [Events & Webcasts](#) / [Job Center](#) / [Vendor Research Directory](#)

Copyright 1998-2010 Toolbox.com. All rights reserved. All product names are trademarks of their respective companies. Toolbox.com is not affiliated with or endorsed by any company listed at this site. Toolbox.com is a subsidiary of the [Corporate Executive Board](#).